

## THE REDEEMER'S CARE FOR HIS CHURCH.

### I. As Pictured in Revelation.

In the first chapter of Revelation we have seen Jesus Christ presenting himself to the sufferer John in exile as the Redeemer, both human and divine, clothed with salvation, with omniscience and omnipotence, and with victory over death.

In the two chapters which follow we find Christ telling his Church what sort of people and what sort of churches they must be in order to have their full share in the victory that he is preparing. This brings us to—

### II. The Character that Christ Requires in His Church. Chapters 2 and 3.

In each of the messages to the seven churches Christ begins with warnings of a defect that may be found or that is found in any church. To name them is sufficient. Ephesus, a loss of "first love"; Pergamos, permitting erroneous doctrine; Thyatira, tolerating vicious conduct; Sardis, "A name that thou livest and art dead"; Philadelphia, a "little strength"; Laodicea, "lukewarm, neither cold nor hot."

In each of them, Christ reminds the hearers that they must strive to overcome, if they would share in his glory. "To him that overcometh" is repeated seven times. This is the duty of every church and of every Christian. Even if thou be under persecution, be sure to overcome.

To each of them Christ gives a glorious promise of reward. To Ephesus, "To eat of the tree of life." To Smyrna, "Ye shall not be hurt of the second death." To Pergamos, "To eat of the hidden manna." To Thyatira, "Power over the nations and the morning star." To Sardis, "White raiment." To Philadelphia, to be "a pillar in the temple of my God." And to Laodicea, "To sit with me in my throne."

Such is the heavenly reminder of the character, the aim and the reward of every one who names the name of Christ.

### III. The Redeemer Overruling Earthly Events for the Welfare of His People.

#### Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

In the third section of this book the language assumes a symbolic character which is not so easy to understand. Yet in it there is enough that is distinct, to guide us to the purpose of Christ in writing it.

The beginning of this section is marked by the clause (verse 5), "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices." By this we are told that a new subject is being introduced. What is its purport?

A throne and a king upon it. Four "living ones" and twenty-four elders which are representatives of redeemed sinners on earth. And a book, sealed with seven seals, which no man could open except "the Lamb that was slain." He alone can open the book, and reveal its contents. And then there was a white horse of victory, a red horse of war, a black horse of famine, and a pale horse of persecution. Besides this there was (on the opening of the fifth seal) an exhortation to patience and waiting on the part of God's children, and in the sixth seal, rewards, both of vengeance on his enemies and

blessings on his children. In the seventh seal there was silence, peace and rest.

All this is a presentation of the vicissitudes of earth. War, famine and persecution show us that the revealer is telling about occurrences in this world. So also the judgments and the blessings that are bestowed under the sixth seal are to be executed on earth. It seems to be an epitome of the relations of earthly affairs to the life and the triumph of the Church of God.

It were easy for those early disciples to imagine that from the day of the resurrection of Jesus there would be no more persecutions, but simply uninterrupted prosperity to the Church. Such a thought inspired the question which they put to Jesus on the day of his ascension, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" At that time Jesus did not reply. But in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of Revelation we find the answer. It is to the effect that the victory is sure, but that it will come to us through the vicissitudes of wars, and of famines and of persecutions. A very important reply is this to us. These vicissitudes have already come upon the Church, and will repeat themselves, doubtless, many, many times. But in these chapters, we are forewarned so that we need not be dejected by them.

What are the particulars of this presentation?

In the first chapter the king was in the midst of the golden candlesticks, which represent the Church, to direct and govern all its operations. In the fourth chapter, which we are now considering, the king is presented to us on a throne surrounded by a rainbow, the symbol of God's covenant of salvation. In the first chapter, the Church is presented as candlesticks; in this, it is represented by elders, four and twenty, and by four "living ones." Here we must explain. In verse 6 the common translation is "beasts," or (R. V.) "living creatures." Both translations are inadequate. There is no word in the Greek of this verse which means beast or creature. The Greek word is the present participle of the verb to live, and clearly means, "living ones" or possessors of life, and the descriptions of verses 7 and 8 suggest that they are the same that were represented in the cherubim on the ark of the covenant. In the first chapter the king had a sword in his mouth, in this he has a book in his hand, and as he opens the book the occurrences of earth come to view.

But mark! among these occurrences, first and foremost, comes the white horse of victory, and his rider, Christ, "went forth, conquering and to conquer." There is a guarantee of triumph for the Church. Then in the second seal comes the red horse of war, but it comes not as a successful opponent of the king, but as subservient and obedient. Then comes the black horse of famine, it is also subservient to the Gospel. In like manner the pale horse of persecution is made to follow in the train of Christ as one of his servants. We have esteemed these things, wars and persecutions as enemies of the Gospel. Christ here tells John that he will transform them into servants of the Gospel.

In the opening of the fifth seal we see the souls of those who have been in persecution, not now in suffering, but in a place of safety and honor "under the altar,"